

Save energy, save money and stay warm: your guide to energy efficiency in tenements

FACTSHEET 2

Reducing heat loss from your windows and doors

Tenements usually have original wooden doors and single glazed sash and case windows. You can reduce the heat lost through these to make your home warmer, save money and reduce the energy you use.

This factsheet covers:

- Using curtains, blinds and shutters.
- Improving your windows.
- Insulating or replacing your front door.

Draught-proofing windows is covered separately in [Factsheet 3](#).

Hanging a thick, lined curtain will reduce heat loss and make your home feel much more comfortable.



Improving your windows

If your windows are single glazed they will lose a lot of heat. Improving or changing them will make your home feel warmer and save you money on your heating bills, especially if you have large windows such as bay windows.

Curtains, blinds and shutters

You can reduce heat loss from your windows by fitting:

- **Curtains:** Hanging a thick, lined curtain will reduce heat loss and make your home feel more comfortable. Make sure curtains are sized to the window, fitted correctly and do not hang in front of radiators.
- **Blinds:** Adding a thermal blind between a window and the curtain will provide an extra layer to reduce heat loss and draughts further.
- **Shutters:** Fitting shutters (pictured, right) can reduce heat loss from windows by up to half¹. Speak to a joiner if you want to install them. They can also repair existing shutters if they don't shut properly, are in poor condition or have been painted shut. They cost around £300 per window². You can also get insulated shutters which cost more at around £600 per window³.



1 Source: Historic Scotland (2013) [Fabric Improvements for Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings](#)

2 Source: Historic Scotland and Changeworks (2012) [Technical paper 16](#)

3 Source: Historic Scotland (2012) [Refurbishment case study 1](#)



Double glazing

Depending on where you live, there may be restrictions on certain window improvements. This mainly relates to conservation areas and listed buildings, where you may need planning permission or listed building consent, or both. Speak to your local authority planning department to find out if either applies to your home. If it does, try to find improvements that do not impact the appearance or mean you have to remove the original windows.

Timber framed sash windows are generally the most appropriate for older tenements. Although other frames exist, well-made timber double glazing is readily available, and if well looked after it can last a long time. If you put in double glazing, make sure the windows have trickle vents to allow moisture to escape which will reduce the build-up of condensation and damp. It is very important to open the trickle vents and not seal them up, particularly in rooms that are likely to get condensation such as bathrooms and kitchens. Standard double glazing may not be permitted if you live in a listed building or conservation area; see right.

The cost of double glazing is around £400 – £800 per window⁴, depending on the type and size of window, and type of frame. Replacing single glazed windows with double glazing will save you about £40 – £60 per year⁵.

⁴ Source: Range of costs taken from Historic Scotland and Changeworks (2012) [Technical paper 16](#) and David Adamson Surveyors (2012)

⁵ Source: Energy Saving Trust (2015)



Slim-profile double glazing

If you live in a listed building or conservation area it may still be possible to install double glazing. Slim-profile windows look more like original windows because the gap between the two panes of glass is smaller (about 6–16mm). Their performance varies, but the best systems can be as good at reducing heat loss as standard double glazing.

Instead of replacing the whole window, you might be able to insert slim-profile double glazed panes of glass into the existing frame, known as a casing. This means inserting multiple smaller panes of glass, or one large double glazed unit into each sash casing.

This is also a good opportunity to draught-proof your windows, see [Factsheet 3](#).

Reveals

The side walls around windows and external doors are known as 'reveals'. These parts of the wall are often much thinner (especially where there are shutters) and so can be colder. If you fit double glazing or insulate your front door, it is recommended you also insulate the reveals. Otherwise they can become damp or mould can appear. One of the best methods for insulating this area is using blown bead (see [Factsheet 4](#) on wall insulation).





Secondary glazing

An alternative to double glazing is secondary glazing. This means adding a second layer of glass or plastic to the window.

Secondary glazing will make your home warmer and can be as good as double glazing. Whilst some options are cheaper than double glazing, high performance secondary glazing can cost just as much. If you are in a listed building it can be easier to get permission for secondary glazing than double glazing, but make sure the type you choose has the least visual impact possible.

If you are putting in secondary glazing, draught-proofing the window is not recommended because this can increase the risk of condensation between the two windows. However, this will depend on the type of secondary glazing and the condition of your original window.

Transparent film

A low cost way to fit secondary glazing is to use transparent film, which is a bit like cling film. You can buy this in hardware shops or online for about £2.50 per window⁶. It can be very effective at reducing condensation on windows and you can fix it on yourself. However you may not be able to open your window until it is removed and it won't last long before it comes off, probably one winter. If you are renting your home, this is something you could do as it doesn't require planning consent or permission from your landlord.

Plastic sheet

Another DIY option is to get a sheet of clear plastic cut to size, and fix it to your window frame using Velcro or magnetic strips. This is simple and cheap, and can be re-used each winter. It will prevent you from opening your window so it is only suitable in some circumstances.



Secondary glazing unit

Secondary windows can be bought or made to measure. They will generally sit a little way from the original window, although you can get some that will fit next to it. Either way, the position of the frame should match the original window.

Make sure you can open the secondary glazing to ventilate the room and allow you to clean and maintain the original windows. There are a range of opening styles to suit the original window and the layout of your room, some slide or tilt open whilst others can be removed from the frame altogether.

If you have shutters you will need to choose a style of secondary glazing that fits closer to the original window. You may also have to replace the handle on the shutter with a ridge to grip, so that it won't damage the secondary glazing when you close them.



⁶ Source: Changeworks (2015) costs research



Improving doors

Most tenements have a front door to each flat and a main front door to the communal stairs. Stairwells tend to be cold and draughty, so both of these doors will lose heat.

You can save energy by refurbishing or replacing your doors. Draught-proofing doors also saves energy, this is covered in [Factsheet 3](#). You can also hang a curtain immediately inside the door to your flat.

If your building is listed, speak to your local authority before you make any improvements.

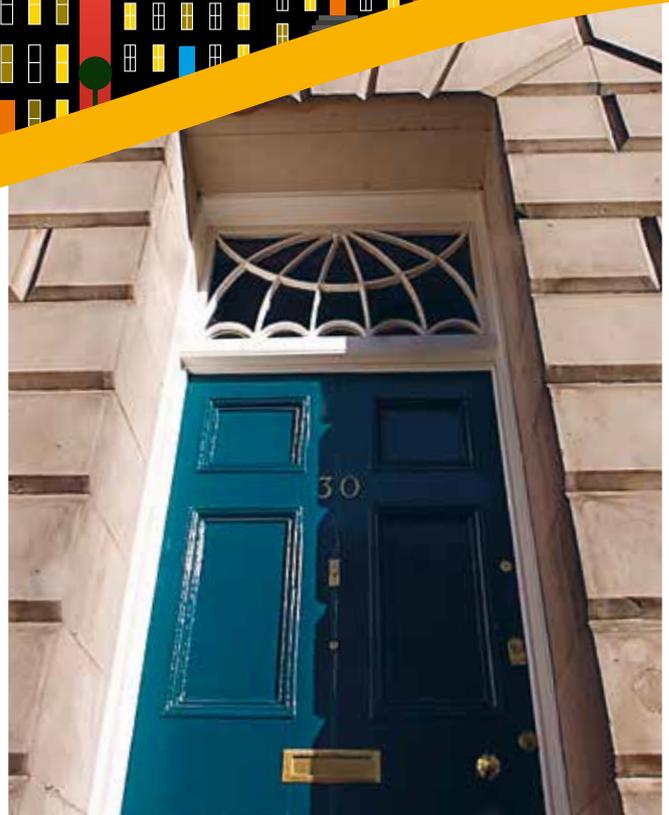
Refurbishing doors

You can reduce the amount of heat lost from your door by:

- **Insulating the wooden panels within the door.** These are usually thinner than the rest of the door and lose more heat. This is specialist work which should be carried out by a joiner.
- **Adding double glazing.** Whilst most tenement doors are solid wood, there are often fan lights above them which are usually single glazed. Double glazing these will reduce heat loss. See [page 6](#) of this Factsheet for details.

Replacing doors

If your original door is very warped or damaged replacing it will reduce heat loss and improve security. An insulated door reduces heat loss but these can be expensive, around £1,200⁷. If you're in a listed building make sure the new door looks similar in appearance.



Communal doors

If there is space behind the communal front door you can add a 'draught lobby'. This is a second door positioned a few meters in from the main door (pictured right). This would require a building warrant and you would need to consider the impact on any decorative features in the stairwell, but it can make a big difference to comfort and heat loss.



You can also draught-proof external doors in your block. Refer to [Factsheet 3](#) and discuss options with your neighbours.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about improving your windows and doors, see these publications:

- Changeworks' report on [Double Glazing in Listed Buildings](#).
- Changeworks' guide to improving energy efficiency in traditional and historic homes, [Energy Heritage](#).
- Historic Scotland's guide to energy efficiency, [Fabric Improvements for Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings](#).
- Historic Scotland's guide on shutters, [Inform Guide](#).

⁷ Source: Historic Scotland and Changeworks (2012) [Technical paper 16](#)

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